

The Enlightenment of Student Affairs Management in British Universities on Student Work of Chinese University

YU Hui^[a]; ZHANG Zhongqiu^{[b],*}

^[a] Assistant Researcher, School office of Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an, China.

^[b] Associate Professor, Mingde College of Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 28 August 2019; accepted 1 December 2019

Published online 26 December 2019

Abstract

Students affairs is one essential component in the whole talents cultivation in universities, it indeed has the enhancement for universities to shape the morality and cultivation as its fundamental task, and the cultivation for the new generations who carrying on the national revitalization. The students affairs in universities of UK has been developed for such a long period, now it has the framework with clear notions, completed system and highly specialized which plays an important role in its cultivation system. In the process of promoting educational power to enhance the national competitiveness, Chinese universities should emancipate the mind, updates their thought, and based on the new scenario of the society to embrace the positive experience from educational developed countries selectively, to help the high-equality development of students affairs in universities from our country, to cultivate socialist constructors and successors of all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique, art.

Key words: British universities; Student affairs management; Talent training

Yu, H., & Zhang, Z. Q. (2019). The Enlightenment of Student Affairs Management in British Universities on Student Work of Chinese University. *Management Science and Engineering*, 13(1), 22-26. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/mse/article/view/11446>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11446>

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, China attached great importance on education and regarded it as a top priority, actively promoting the reform of education and made a series of historical achievements, which attracted worldwide attention. In recent years, the Party Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core has placed considerable value on education, insisting on putting education in a strategic position of priority development, and made a series of decisions and arrangements for it. The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that it is necessary to speed up the construction of first-class universities and first-class disciplines to realize the connotative development of higher education. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that the foundation of a university is to strengthen moral education and cultivate students. Only a university that has cultivated first-class talents can become a world first-class university. Entering a new era, a common issue faced by colleges and universities is how to cultivate first-class talents. The author believes that in order to cultivate first-class talents, on the one hand, we must inherit and carry forward the valuable experience in cultivating talents, on the other hand, we must focus on the development requirements of era and the growth needs of youth, we need to actively learn from the useful experience of student affairs management in developed countries, deepening the supply side reform of student affairs, providing support and guarantee for the growth and overall development of students. The higher education in UK has passed a long way with more than 800 years, it is well-known for standardized management and excellent quality. As an important part of British higher education, student affairs management has formed a system with clear concept, complete system and high

specialization, which is an important part for cultivating outstanding talents. In opinion of Feng Gang “Student affairs management in UK mainly refers to the various services, management, support and assistance provided by British universities for the development needs of students studying and living outside the classroom during academic year”. Based on this, the student affairs management of British universities is similar to that in Chinese universities. Therefore, under the condition of complete credit system, in-depth study of the historical development and characteristics of British higher education student affairs has an important reference and promoting effect in helping us improve the pertinence, effectiveness and epochal character of student affairs.

1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

In the 1970s, the famous American scholar Martin Trow said that based on the gross enrollment rate and the diversity of higher education. When the gross enrollment rate is below 15%, it is the stage of elite education. 15%-50% is the stage of popular education, and when the gross enrollment rate is above 50%, it is the stage of universal education. British higher education has a long history, dating back to the 12th century. During the period of more than 800 years development, it has transformed from elite education to popular education, and from popular education to universal education. The management of student affairs has also been developed and improved in this long historical practice, which is mainly divided into three stages.

1.1 The Stage of Development Before the 1960s and in 1970s

At this stage, the overall scale of British universities is not large and the gross enrollment rate is not high. In 1960, there were only 20 colleges and universities in the UK, and the gross enrollment rate was only 5%, which was in the stage of elite education. Initially, the main purpose of the British universities, including world-renowned universities such as the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge, was to cultivate the children of upper-class people into “gentlemen”. Due to the young age of these children, all of them are required to stay in the dormitory. The university arrange a staff member living in each dormitory to provide students with life services and ethical guidelines, who may replace their parents and are responsible for students’ moral progress and academic development. This is the early student affairs management in British universities. In this stage, the main task of student affairs in British universities is service, the content and concept of which is continuously enriched and deepened, realizing the transformation from single

service to diversified service, which means that realizing the transformation from service, like providing students’ daily life suggestions to service such as psychological counseling, career guidance, and personal development required for personality, which laid a solid foundation for the construction of student affairs management system in contemporary British universities.

1.2 The Stage of Development in the 1960s and 1970s

After the World War II, British government issued a series of important laws and reports that have had an important impact on the development of higher education in the UK. For example, in 1966, the British government published a white paper “A plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges”, proposing the concept of “dual system” in higher education, dividing universities into traditional universities and polytechnics. Among them, traditional universities are autonomous and have degree-granting rights, funding of which are allocated by the government through appropriation committee, there kind of universities focus on academic research. The “public” polytechnics are funded by the local education departments, they don’t have the right to grant degree and mainly focus on serving the community. With the implementation of the “dual system”, in 1987 the gross enrollment rate of British higher education is 15%, realizing the transformation from elite education to popular education. The number of students was increasing, the group of students diversified, meanwhile, the demand and problems of students were constantly increasing and gradually emerged. Based on this, the student affairs management in British universities began to focus on the education of students’ concept on “civil” status, rights, responsibilities, ethics, etc., in this way, students could participate in various social activities, so that they could get exercise in practice. In addition, the development of student affairs management curriculum and the professional construction of student affairs team was a historic breakthrough. In this stage, on the basis of consolidating and expanding the experience of the previous stage, university student affairs management in the UK has formed a series of new concepts, such as “people-oriented” concept, concept of rule of law, student-participation concept, based on which the student affairs management system of British universities was initially constructed.

1.3 The Stage of Development After the 1990s

In 1992, the British government enacted the “Further and Higher Education Act 1992”, which abolished the “dual system” of higher education, upgrading the Polytechnic to a university, and being in the same position as the “autonomous” universities, enjoying the right to grant degrees. The implementation of this Act has promoted the rapid expansion of higher education. The gross enrollment rate of it was only 20% in the early 1990s and reached 56.48% in 2014, which has transformed from popular education to universal education. The

diverse characteristics of students have been continuously presented, like the number of students has increased dramatically, the range of students was becoming wider, the age structure and components of them has expanded. During this period, the Student Charter issued by the British government stated that students are given the role of Customers, and that students have the right to receive good guidance from tutors, career counselors, consultants, as well as to enjoy all kinds of study and life service provided by the university. The implementation of the Student Charter has strengthened the integration and professionalization of student service. At this stage of development, the management of student affairs in British universities is characterized by global competition, rapid expansion of content, arduous tasks, wide participation and improved status. The service concept, people-oriented concept, rule of law concept, and student participation concept are all obtained, establishing a contemporary student affairs management system with clear concepts, complete systems and high specialization in British universities.

2. THE CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

2.1 The Clear Concept of Student Affairs Management

The management of student affairs in British universities is aimed at providing students with comprehensive services and promoting the all-round development of them. The core concepts throughout the work include service concept, people-oriented concept and the rule of law concept. These concepts play an important role in the cultivation of excellent talents. The service concept was born at the beginning of the establishment of British universities. At that time, the service concept had a simple connotation, content and method. With the development of British higher education, the service concept has always run through the whole process of student affairs management development, and the service connotation has been continuously deepened, and the service content and service objects have been continuously enriched. The people-oriented concept is a long-term and practical concept in student affairs management in British universities. British universities adhere to this concept, regarding individual students as the main object, student needs as the key point, student satisfaction as the standard, stimulation of students' potential as the method, helping students succeed as the goal, in order to promote the comprehensive development of each student. The British government has issued series of policies and regulations that strengthen the identity of students as "customers" and require universities to provide services and support to students. In 2011, a white paper entitled

"Putting students at the heart of higher education" was also enacted, clarifying the ideas of universities on student around the growth of students. The concept of the rule of law is an important feature of student affairs management in British universities that is different from that of other countries. This is mainly because the British student affairs is built on the basis of the concept of the rule of law in Western countries, and has a strong sense of it. On the one hand, the university uses this concept to formulate complete rules and regulations related to student affairs management, the main subjects and objects of education should work under the framework of these rules to regulate their behavior; on the other hand, when schools have statutory problems in dealing with student affairs, they will go through judicial procedures instead of using administrative methods to solve related problems. The university and departments have clear bound in responsibilities and are only responsible for the related work content.

2.2 The Complete Student Affairs Management System

The British universities have a working system, which regards university as the heart, schools and departments coordinate. This system is characterized by rational division of work, simple hierarchy and high efficiency. At the university level, the president and a non-professional vice president are responsible for student affairs. The university has a student affairs department and is fully responsible for all student affairs except for study. The Student Affairs Department usually has a director who is directly responsible to the university president. For example, the Student Affairs Department in the University of Reading is one of the five permanent administrative departments. It has more than 10 divisions including Student Registration Office, Accommodation Office, and Psychological Counseling Service Center. The Student Affairs Department has clear responsibilities, cooperation and teamwork, standard management, providing services and support directly to all students in the university. Students who have difficulties or doubts during their stay in the university will directly go to the relevant office of Student Affairs Department for assistance instead of going to schools or faculties. At the faculty level, the dean or director is usually directly responsible for student affairs. Basically, there is no full-time staff dedicated to student affairs management. Generally, the faculty hires a "Senior tutor" and some "Individual tutors". For example, at the University of Oxford, undergraduate students are assigned individual tutors as soon as they enter university. Each tutor is responsible for several students, mainly to guide their academic work, as well as students' daily life and mental health. The "Individual tutors" regularly communicate with the students and give a comprehensive evaluation of the students' school life, and discuss the relevant situation with the "Senior tutor" timely.

2.3 The High Professionalization of Student Affairs Management

As mentioned before, the student affairs management in British universities is on university level and is implemented directly by student affairs department. The professionalization of student affairs management in British universities is mainly reflected in the following aspects. Firstly, the division of student affairs is refined. According to the needs of students, the student affairs department provides services including enrollment, student status management, admission counseling, accommodation services, psychological counseling, examinations, employment guidance, funding, and study abroad services. At the same time, there are many associations in the field of student affairs management in the UK, which play an important role in the continuous provision of quality services to students. Secondly, establishing “one-stop” service center or building to integrate different departments and services from study, life and development of students, providing them with high-quality services and support. Thirdly, they have a highly qualified and professional student affairs team. Generally, British universities require the student affairs team to have both relevant professional knowledge and rich work experience in related fields. For example, the full-time staff in the Counseling Agency of Heriot-Watt University are accredited by the British Psychological Counseling and Psychiatric Institutions, and have extensive experience in psychological counseling. One of them is a senior counselor who has worked for more than 20 years.

3. ENLIGHTENMENT ON HIGH-QUALITY STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

3.1 Concept: Strengthening the Concept of Regarding Student Development as the Priority of Work

The management of student affairs in British universities has a clear guiding strategy and specific methods. Particularly, it puts the people-oriented concept in all areas and aspects of British student affairs management, and has achieved a high-level development. In fact, the “Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Ideological and Political Education of Students” issued by the State Council of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2004, clearly stated that universities must implement the people-oriented concept and make efforts to do student management affairs. In 2016 General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Education in universities that ideological and political education is a life work, we must focus on students, care

for students, and serve students. Chinese universities have been doing a lot in implementing the people-oriented concept and promoting the development of students, and made many achievements in it. For example, the educational philosophy of Northwestern Polytechnical University(NPU) is “regarding students as the fundamental, education as the core, scholars as the indispensability, science as the soul, and responsibilities as the priority”, has gradually become a common prospect and action of all staff and students in the long-term running practice. NPU insists that making “regarding students as the fundamental” as the starting point and foothold of planning all kinds of tasks and dealing with conflicts. NPU takes practical action to care and pay attention to the growth of students. At present, universities undertake the heavy responsibility of cultivating builders and successors of socialism who are fully developed in the fields of moral, intellectual, physical, art, and labor. It is the basic prerequisite to do the high-quality student affairs management to learn from the advanced concepts of student affairs management in British universities, combining national conditions and needs of higher education development in China, practicing and implementing the concept of focusing on student development. Firstly, it is necessary to solidify the concept of focusing on student development through policy documents, making them as the guiding ideology and basic adherence to promote the student affairs. Secondly, it is important to put the concept of focusing on student development through learning, life, social practice and etc., educating all faculty and staff to care about students, concentrate on students and achieve students, striving to build a “Talent Training System” with courses, research, practice, culture, network, psychology, management, service, funding, organization to ensure the comprehensive development of students. The third one is to make the overall development of students as the logical starting point, respect the student’s subject status, stimulate their potential, mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of students to participate in various practical activities, striving to achieve comprehensive development of students.

3.2 Organization: Deepening the Reform and Innovation of Student Affairs Management

The student affairs management system in British universities is complete, the structure is simple, the separation of responsibility is clear, and the degree of specialization is high, which provides students with high quality service and support. Due to historical reasons, the student affairs management system in China is complicated, which gives rise to that the information transmission efficiency is low, the response to students’ demand is slow, and the degree of specialization is not high. In recent years, more and more universities have recognized these problems. In order to solve these

problems, actively promote the construction of “one-stop” service for students. However, due to different orientations, the “one-stop” service in various universities are unevenly constructed, which needs to be improved. In response to these problems, on basis of inheriting and promoting the advantages and experience of existing student affairs management, Chinese universities are supposed to promote the reform and innovation of student affairs management from the organizational structure to serve the development of students. Firstly, on basis of sorting out the responsibility of different departments related to student affairs, optimizing and integrating available resources, defining the boundaries of responsibility, to construct a working pattern with clear division of work, close cooperation and form a joint mechanism of student affairs management. Secondly, exploring the working pattern of integration of students’ ideological and political education system and student affairs service system, constructing a student affairs two-level service center from university and school, which directly provides consultation, service and guidance to the all students. Thirdly, strengthening the construction of high-quality professional staff team for student affairs management. On the one hand, we must build a team of staff and instructors with high political quality and strong capability. The school should select instructors from young teachers and outstanding doctoral students, giving full play to their ideological leadership and academic guidance. Advantage. On the other hand, selecting staff with strong professional background and experience to work full-time on student affairs, promoting career development channels and continuously improving capabilities and service levels.

3.3 Method: Improving the Pertinence and Effectiveness of Student Affairs Management

The service concept is one of the important characteristics of student affairs management in British universities. Due to the influence of traditional concepts, in Chinese universities students are regarded as objects to be administered instead of as objects to be served. They use same standards and unified patterns to require students, ignoring the diversity and individualization of students’ demand, which give rise to poor student affairs management. At the new era, in face of the young generation with active thinking, individual independence and wide knowledge, Chinese universities should improve the methods of student affairs management, and improve the pertinence and effectiveness of it. Firstly, lucubrating and accurately grasping the demands of students, deepening the reform of the supply side of students’ affairs management, providing more effective service for the development of students, in order to accomplish the students’ ideological and political education and the “precise service” of student affairs management. Secondly, focusing on the task of moral education and cultivation of students, sorting out the

cultivation elements of all the posts in the university, strengthening the service consciousness of all faculty and staff, improving the ability of educating students and constructing a working pattern, characterized “all staff, all-round, whole process”. Thirdly, using the concept of recessive education in ideological and political education, giving new connotation, new methods and new forms to traditional ideological and political education, in order to transform it into life-oriented and practical one, taking advantage of the campus environment, student activities, rules and regulations and educators’ behavior to achieve success of cultivating students in a smooth and silent way.

REFERENCES

- Antony McClaran, Guo Zhaohong. (2015). A new method of quality guarantee in higher education—Based on a British perspective. *Higher Education Development and Evaluation*, 3, 36-44.
- Feng, G., & Zhao, F. (2008). *British university student affairs management*. Beijing: China Renmin University Press.
- Guo, L. (2011). A Comparison of Student affairs between universities in China and in UK. *Journal of Southwest Minzu University*, 3, 222-224.
- Li, Y. S. (2008). Professional development of student affairs in British universities and its enlightenment. *Higher Education Exploration*, 5, 66-70.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2016). Wikipedia [EB/OL]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO_Institutefor_Statistics, 2016-12-08.
- Wang, H., & Liu, X. (2016). Service and education: Explorations and reflections on “one-stop” service centers in China university students’ affairs. *Journal of Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics*, 3, 96-100.
- Wang, J. S., & Zhang, W. (2017). “Five concepts” improve the precision of ideological and political work. *China Education Daily*, 10(5).
- Wang, L. Z., & Chen, J. H. (2017). Service and support: Micro exploration on the student affairs management system in reading university in UK. *Educational Research*, 2, 152-156.
- Wu, D. R., & Yi, M. C. (2018). Popularization and development patterns of the world higher education—Based on the analysis of the relevant data from UNESCO UIS. *Educational Research*, 4, 135-149.
- Yu, G. H. (2013). *A comparative study of Chinese and British university student affairs*. Wuhan: Wuhan University.
- Zhong, B. L., & Wang, X. F. (2019). Opportunities, challenges and prospects: Universal access of higher education in China. *China Higher Education Research*, 8, 7-13.
- Zhou, L. (2017). Modern development of U.K. higher education and its enlightenment. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, 11, 86-90.
- Zuo, D. S., Fang, L., & Wang, X. B. (2019). The British enlightenment of college student affairs under the background of “Double-first class” construction. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, 4, 104-108.